

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-01 ISO-00 /005 R

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DRAFTED BY: NEA:EGABINGTON:MAR

APPROVED BY: NEA:EGABINGTON

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P 172038Z FEB 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 037893

FOR ATHERTON

FOLLOWING REPEAT ALGIERS 399 ACTION SECSTATE INFO DIA
NOUAKCHOTT AMMAN DAKAR MADRID PARIS RABAT TEHRAN TRIPOLI TUNIS C
CAIRO JIDDA USUN USCINCEUR CINCUSNAVEUR FOSIF ROTA COMSIXTHFLT
ADDIS ABABA BAGHDAD DAMASCUS 16 FEB

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 0399

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, AG, MO, SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA: ALGERIANS DENY STRIKING MOROCCANS

REF: RABAT 844 (NOTAL)

1. OFFICIAL ALGERIAN PRESS FEB 16 DENIES THAT ALGIERAN
FORCES ATTACKED MOROCCANS AT AMGALA AS KING HASSAN ASSER-

TED IN MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE PUBLISHED BY
MOROCCAN NEWS AGENCY (REFTEL). "THIS FALSE ACCUSATION,"
PRESS SAYS, "WILL FOOL NO ONE" AS IT IS NOT UNUSUAL
FOR POLISARIO TO INFLICT "POWERFUL DEFEATS" ON MOROCCAN
AND MAURITANIAN FORCES. F-5 AND FOUGA MAGISTER HAVE
BEEN DESTROYED, AND "THIS SUNDAY" IT WAS ANNOUNCED
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THAT BATTALION OF MOROCCAN FORCES WAS ENCIRCLED AT

HAWZA. SUCH ACTIONS WILL CONTINUE, PRESS SAYS, AS LONG AS RABAT CONTINUES ITS OCCUPATION OF SAHARA, AND COUNCIL OF REVOLUTION AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS NOTED ON FEB 11 THAT PEACE AND STABILITY COULD NOT BE ASSURED UNTIL SAHRAOUI RIGHTS RECOGNIZED.

2. PRESS ALSO DENIES THAT ALGERIA INTENDS TO GO TO WAR. GOA, PRESS CLAIMS, ACTED RESPONSIBLY IN NOT ALLOWING JAN 29 INCIDENT AT AMGALA TO WIDEN. KING, HOWEVER, NOW FALSELY ACCUSING ALGERIA OF ACTION WHICH IT DID NOT UNDERTAKE AND WHICH IT HAD NO INTENTION OF UNDERTAKING; IF HIS "CALL" NOT INDICATION THAT HE HARBORS BELLICOSE INTENTIONS, "WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS FOOLING." CERTAINLY NOT ALGERIAN PUBLIC OPINION BECAUSE, IF ALGERIA HAS NO FORCES IN SAHARA, IT NONETHELESS REMAINS INTERESTED AND CONCERNED PARTY AND STANDS AT SIDE OF SAHRAOUI AND POLISARIO.

3. ACCORDING TO FOREIGN NEWSMAN HERE, POLISARIO CLAIMS THAT "THIS SUNDAY" INCIDENT MENTIONED ABOVE HAS RESULTED IN DESTRUCTION OF MOROCCAN BATTALION AT HAWZA BY GUERRILLAS. POLISARIO SAYS NO FIGHTING TOOK PLACE AT AMGALA OVER WEEKEND AND CHARGES KING WITH OBFUSCATION.

4. COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND THAT KING'S MESSAGE REFERRED TO ALGERIAN ATTACK ON MOROCCAN GARRISON LEFT AT AMGALA. IT MAY BE THAT SOME OF MOROCCAN TROOPS USED TO OCCUPY AMGALA HAD MOVED ON TO CONDUCT OPERATIONS FARTHER EAST AND THAT ALGERIANS AND POLISARIO TOOK OCCASION TO ATTACK THOSE REMAINING IN OASIS.

5. HAVE NO INDEPENDENT INFO RE ACTION AT HAWZA. WE NOTE THAT IN PAST POLISARIO COMMUNIQUE, WHILE EXAGGERATED, HAVE GENERALLY CONTAINED KERNEL OF TRUTH.

6. ALGERIAN RADIO MONITORED 1300Z ADDS NOTHING NEW ON INCIDENT. PARKER UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PARAMILITARY FORCES, COMBAT OPERATIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE037893
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA:EGABINGTON:MAR
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760059-0491
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760242/aaaablal.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 RABAT 844
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <29 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA: ALGERIANS DENY STRIKING MOROCCANS
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, AG, MO, SS
To: NATO BRUSSELS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006